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THE CANADIAN URBAN VICTIMIZATION SURVEY (1982) AN EVALUATION

BY

STATISTICS DIVISION

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INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey which was undertaken by the Ministry of the Solicitor General in 1982 was probably the largest survey of this kind ever undertaken in Canada. For this survey, Statistics Canada interviewers asked more than 61,000 Canadians in seven major urban centres to talk about their perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system, about whether they had been victims of certain crimes over the past year, the impact of any victimization they had experienced, and about their crime prevention awareness and practices.

Crime (or victimization) surveys have been conducted in a number of western countries since the early 1970's, and in some, like the United States, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom the surveys are conducted at regular intervals. In the United States, subjects who have been randomly selected to be in the survey remain as members of the survey panel and are interviewed every six months. Recently some variant of victimization surveys have been conducted in Singapore and Israel and a major survey is under development in Japan.

Not surprisingly, surveys of this magnitude are relatively expensive, although the telephone sampling and interviewing methodology developed in Canada was much less expensive than the in-person interviewing used in other countries. We are currently sharing our methodology with interested Third World countries. Careful pre-testing had demonstrated that data obtained by telephone were comparable to those obtained by in-person interviews, and that there were even some other advantages to interviewing by telephone beside the obvious one of economy.

The cost of conducting the inital survey and preparing the data for analysis was almost $1,000,000.

In this report the major aims of the survey will be reviewed, and an assessment made of the extent to which the survey findings have been used in the development of criminal justice programs and policies, and more generlly by researchers and by educators.

BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY: FILLING THE CRIME DATA GAPS

The need for comprehensive, reliable data about the extent and distribution of crime in Canadian society has long been recognized by police, policy makers and researchers. Although considerable improvement can be demonstrated in the quality and comprehensiveness of crime data collected by the police, (and published by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics) since the implementation of Uniform Crime Reporting program more than 20 years ago, these data are, by their very nature, limited in what they can tell us about crime in Canada. Quite apart from questions of reliability and comparability, which are always a problem when data are being collected and collated by thousands of different individuals in different police departments across the country, the scope of the information available to the police is limited, and beyond this, the information which they must include in the standardized data forms says little or nothing about the victims of crime, except in the special case of homicide.

Police can only investigate and record incidents which are reported to them, or which otherwise come directly to their attention. This means that if victims fail or refuse to report crimes to the police, or if crimes are, in the sociological sense, "victimless", they stand very little chance of being recorded as crimes in the Uniform Crime Reports. This deficiency

is not unique to crime statistics in Canada, nor is it a situation which can be completely corrected by better police-citizen relations or by better police or citizen training, but it does pose several problems for police planners and policy analysts who must endeavor to respond to the total crime situation in our communities, not just that proportion of it that becomes "official" by being reported, recorded and designated as "founded" after preliminary investigation by police.

The other serious limitation of police statistics relates to the lack of information on victims themselves. Without information on the victims of crime we are able to say very little about risk of victimization for specific segments of the population or about the seriousness of victimization. Until we know, for example, the types of dwellings which are most likely to be broken into, or the precautions usually taken to guard against such illegal entry, we are unable to assess the effectiveness of crime prevention actions taken by individuals or of crime prevention programs in our communities, or to weigh the effectiveness of policing strategies. Similarly, without consistent and reliable data about assault, robbery or personal theft victims, and about other incident characteristics, we may draw incorrect conclusions about which groups are most at risk. Victimization data provide information about the nature of incidents and their consequences for victims which allow a much fuller undertstanding of the nature and seriousness of the "crime problem".

The major goal of the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (1982) was to provide the Ministry and other concerned Canadians with otherwise unavailable data required to develop effective policing, crime prevention and victim policies, and

more generally to improve our theoretical and empirical knowledge about crime in Canadian cities. The five major themes addressed in the survey therefore included:

i) the extent and distribution of certain crimes;
ii) the risk of criminal victimization;
iii) the impact of criminal victimization;
iv) public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system; and
v) victims' perceptions and needs.

The eight major categories of crimes included in the survey were: sexual assault, robbery, assault, break and entry, motor vehicle theft, theft of household property, theft of personal property and vandalism. It is because of the low incidence of some types of crime (such as sexual assault) that such large sample are required to ensure that enough cases are "caught" to be statistically representative of all actual cases in the community under study. Sample sizes ranged from 6,910 in one city to 9,563 in another. The cities included in the study were Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax-Dartmouth and St. John's.

THE FINDINGS

More than half (58%) of the victimization incidents described to the interviewers were never reported to the police. The principal reasons given for this failure to report were that victims considered unreported incidents to be too trivial, or

because they felt the police could do nothing about the situation anyway, or because nothing had actually been taken, or items were recovered - in general, because victims perceived that the costs of reporting outweighed the potential benefits. Crimes that were most likely to be reported were theft of a motor vehicle, and forcible break and entry in which property was damaged and/or stolen - both situations in which insurance claims depend upon official police reports, and in which losses are likely to be substantial.

On the other hand, some quite serious offences also went un-reported including serious cases of assault or sexual assault. A disturbing 35% of non-reporting sexual assault victims cited "fear of revenge by offender" as a reason for not reporting the crime to police, and 47% of these same victims also gave "concern about the attitude of police and courts" as a deterrent. Clearly more needs to be done to offer physical protection, as well as tactful and courteous treatment to such frightened and abused victims.

Risk of victimization was shown to decline markedly with age. Young persons who are students or looking for work, and who have a high number of evening activities outside the house each month are most likely to be victims of personal violent offences. Males have a higher risk of personal violent victimization than women at all ages although women are much more likely to express fear of crime. At the same time, this survey has confirmed that females are much more likely to be victimized in their own homes and by an acquaintances or relative than are males, again illustrating the special problems which women face.

Popular beliefs to the contrary, elderly pesons were seldom victimized. The fear they expressed seems to be more related to their perceptions of personal vulnerability to the probable physical, emotional or material effects should they be the victims of any crime rather than to demonstrated risk among persons in their own age groups. The clear message for police and community workers is that it is inappropriate and probably harmful to use fear as a means to motivate elderly persons to improve their home or personal security, or to enlist their participation in community crime prevention programs. Although no definite causal relationship can be claimed between the two factors, the survey data show that those who felt most unsafe walking alone in their own neighbourhoods after dark were also those who were least likely to belong to a neighbourhood crime prevention program.

Many other points of direct practical importance emerge from the survey, particularly for policing policy and program development. For example, when they do report crimes to the police victims are most dissatisfied about the amount of information they are given concerning progress of their case, and about prevention of future victimization. Again it would seem that a proactive victim information service provided routinely by police would do a great deal to improve the perceptions which victims have of the justice they do or do not encounter when they seek police assistance.

HOW THE SURVEY FINDINGS HAVE BEEN USED

A. Development of Federal/Provincial Policies

In December 1981 the Federal and Provincial Ministers responsible for criminal justice in Canada established a federal/provincial task force of officials "to examine the needs of victims of crime, to enquire about their experience with the criminal justice system and to recommend action which could be taken to improve present methods of assistance to victims (Canadian Federal-Provincial Task Force on Justice for Victims of Crime, "Highlights", 1983: 1). The Report was tabled at the Ministers' meeting in July 1983.

Many of the preliminary findings of the C.U.V.S. (1982) survey were integrated into the task force Report, and informed many of the recommendations made. One of the recommendations made in the 1983 Report was that the Urban Victimization Survey should be replicated, and that more information should be collected on the emotional trauma experienced by some victims, and their needs for special assistance.

B. Reports for Special Users

A series of User Reports were prepared and distributed to police departments in each of the seven cities studied. Other special reports were prepared for the Department of Justice, (on awareness and use of Criminal Injuries Compensation programs) and for Health and Welfare Canada for a special conference on Abuse of Elderly Persons. Reports were also made available to the 7th United Nations Congress and the Council of Europe.

C. Reports for General Readers: The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey Bulletins Series

A series of six Bulletins on specific topics have been published and disseminated to criminal justice practitioners, researchers, the media, agencies providing services to victims and other interested private citizens. Two more Bulletins will complete the first series. A full list of these publications follows:

Canada, Ministry of the Solicitor General, Research and Statistics Group, Programs Branch. Canadian Urban Victimization Survey series.

1983 Bulletin No. 1, Preliminary Findings.

1984 Bulletin No. 2, Reported and Unreported Crimes.

Bulletin No. 3, Crime Prevention: Awareness and Practice.

1985 Bulletin No. 4, Female Victims of Crime.

Bulletin No. 5, The Cost of Crime.

Bulletin No. 6, Elderly Victims of Crime.

The remaining topics on the first survey will include "Crimes Against Households" and "Multiple Victimization".

Media coverage of each Bulletin has been generally good, including newspaper articles, editorials, national radio interviews and a local television phone-in show.

D. Other Publications

No special presentations have been made to academic societies as yet nor papers published in professional journals but three forthcoming criminological texts will be reprinting Bulletins or quoting extensively from them. One article on "The Cost of Crime" has been published in the Ministry's occasional journal Impact, and a second on "Young Offenders and Young Victims" will appear in the third edition of Impact. A third article will appear in a subsequent edition on "The Emotional Impact of Victimization".

E. Some Practical Applications

As police and other provincial and municipal officials have become familiar with the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey they have recognized the potential usefulness of the data and the methodology to meet their own planning and evaluation needs. We have already responded to the special interests of the Edmonton Police Department by developing a specific module of questions for them and including it in the 1985 replication survey in Edmonton. This experience has confirmed that careful integration of such modules can enhance the relevance of the survey for local users without compromising the comparability of the basic survey components over time, or from one site to another.

Metropolitan Toronto Police have sought our financial and technical assistance with a modified victimization survey which is intended to establish baseline data against which they can evaluate the effects of converting to a community policing strategy in two neigbourhoods. In addition to financial

assistance, the Ministry has assisted with the adaptations needed in the CUVS sampling frame, and has provided ongoing consultation to help the department use the data effectively. Similar requests for financial support, consultation or technical assistance with police planning and evaluation surveys have also been received from British Columbia and from the Province of Saskatchewan. Unfortunately we have not had sufficient resources to respond fully to these requests, but it is clear that those who must make police planning decisions are anxious to avail themselves of the victimization survey technology to obtain some of the data they require to develop policy and evaluate changes.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE USEFULNESS OF THE BULLETINS

A. The "Mini" Telephone Evaluation of the Bulletin series.

In August of 1985, the Statistics Division undertook a small random survey of institutions and individuals on the Bulletin series mailing list to evaluate the adequacy of the mailing list dissemination process and the uses to which the Bulletins were being put, and to assist in developing victimization survey program plans. At the time of the first user survey, only three Bulletins had bee published, one in 1983, and two in 1984, almost a year prior to the telephone survey.

Attempts were made to contact 10% of the mailing list population of 2,108 by telephone. In all, 145 interviews were completed (68% of the sample). Respondents were asked whether they had received all three Bulletins, whether they wished to continue receiving the series, whether they found the Bulletins informative and useful, and (if applicable) how the Bulletins had been used, suggestions for changes or improvements, and whether they remembered sharing the Bulletins or discussing the findings with colleagues.

During this mini survey we recognized that there were some serious dissemination problems - confirmed by the Victims Initiative Program Evaluation Report. Key potential users were not receiving the Bulletins, and some of those to whom it was sent had not realized what it contained. We accordingly revised our dissemination strategy and our mailing list to ensure that potential users were included.

Despite these dissemination problems, when asked about the usefulness of the Bulletin, 96% of those who felt able to express an opinion felt the Bulletins were informative and useful. The Bulletins had been used as a reference source, as teaching material, in program or service delivery and for professional interest or development. Several respondents mentioned that they had used the Bulletins to assist them in treating offenders through a better understanding of the victim's perspective. In one institution, for example, psychologists consulted the Bulletins prior to talking to offenders about their crimes. The Bulletins were also used at workshops and at several levels of the education process, including high schools, universities and police academies.

B. The Mail-Back Evaluation Cards

To follow up with a more thorough assessment of the usefulness and relevance of these reports, postage paid mail-back evaluation cards were included in all copies of Bulletin No. 4 "Female Victims of Crime" and Bulletin No. 6 "Criminal Victimization of Elderly Canadian" which were published in mid October and mid November 1985 respectively. "Female Victims of Crime" was mailed free of charge to some 3,500 recipients,

comprised of 365 individuals and 2,175 organizations on the standard Bulletin mailing list, and about 960 others from a special list of those known or deemed to be particularly interested in the topic area. About 5,000 copies of Bulletin No. 6 on elderly victims were mailed out: 2,540 from the regular Bulletin mailing list and about 2,500 from special lists which had been assembled. The mail-back cards were identifiable by colour, but otherwise identical in terms of format and questions asked. Respondents were to indicate any change in address, and whether they did or did not wish to be retained or added to the regular mailing list. They were also asked to indicate whether the Bulletin in question was useful to them, how the Bulletins were used, and if they had any suggestions for improvements in the Bulletin series.

As of March 20, 1986 a total of 333 response cards have been returned from the Bulletin on Female Victims, for a return rate of 1 card for every 10 Bulletins mailed out . In the four month period that the Bulletin on Elderly Victim has been released, 272 responses have been received, or 1 for every 18 Bulletins distributed. Cards continue to come in.

Even granted the possible bias in such an evaluation survey, responses have been overwhelmingly positive, with 99% of respondents saying the Bulletins were useful. According to respondents, the Bulletins have been most useful as reference sources (80%), for professional interest (70%), as teaching material (40%), and, increasingly in policy or program planning and evaluation (20%).

Some suggested improvements were to include bibliographies, data comparing cities and more tables and graphs. Some special items of interest were also mentioned as worth surveying, for example, victimization of Natives, and the effects of drunken driving on victims. The recurrent negative comments were that the Bulletins were not published often or soon enough.

While respondents may have been limited in their comments by the lack of space on the cards, the evident message in the returns was one of overall satisfaction with the topics and contents covered in the Bulletins. This was further evidenced by the number of requests for back issues received from respondents on the special mailing lists, and requests that their names be included in future mailings in the Victimization Survey Bulletin Series.

Internationally, the Bulletins have also been very well received by criminal justice practitioners in Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Italy, Hong Kong, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands and U.S.A. (Appendix A). Appendix B illustrates the range of Canadian institutions and individuals who also responded to the mail-back survey.

Tables I through III give more detailed information on the distribution of responses to the questions posed on the mail-back evaluation cards.

TABLE I

Have the Bulletins been useful?

	Bulletin No. 4 Female Victims of Crime	Bulletin No. 6 Elderly Victims of Crime
	PERCENT	PERCENT
Yes	95	97
No	1	-
Don't Know	2	2
Did not answer	2	1
TOTAL	100	100
TOTAL NUMBER	333	272

The difference in the returns is because Bulletin No. 4 was mailed out one month prior to Bulletin No. 6.

TABLE II

How have they been useful? Mark all that apply.

	Bulletin No. 4 Female Victims of Crime	Bulletin No. 6 Elderly Victims of Crime
	PERCENT OF RESPONSES	
Data Source Reference	81	81
Teaching Material	39	38
Professional Interest	71	69
Policy Planning/Evaluation	13	20
Program Planning/Evaluation	17	23
Program Service Delivery	15	14
Other	9	13

Respondents could check any or all of the above categories. Most respondents checked more than one item.

TABLE III

Can you suggest ways in which the Bulletins could be changed to better meet your needs?

	Bulletin No. 4 Female Victims of Crime	Bulletin No. 5 Elderly Victims of Crime
	PERCENT OF RESPONSES	
Positive Comments/No Change/ No Comments	85	87
Positive Commments/Suggested Improvements	13	13
Negative comments	2	-
TOTAL RESPONSES	100	100

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The main objectives of the 1982 Canadian Urban Victimization survey were to measure i) the extent and distribution of certain crimes (whether these were reproted to the police or not); ii) the risk of criminal victimization; iii) the impact of criminal victimization; iv) public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system; and v) victims perceptions and needs. In response to the needs expressed by specific victimization survey data users, including the Federal/Provincial Task Force on Justice for Victims of Crime, police and victim service workers, further developmental work was undertaken and tested in the 1985 Edmonton replication survey. Questions about the newly instituted Crime Stoppers program, and about awareness and use of the police-based victim service unit were included at the request of the Edmonton Police Department, and in response to information needs identified by the Task Force, more detailed and extensive quesions about the impact of crime were included.

The early telephone survey of those on the basic mailing list identified problems of production and dissemination which we have corrected. The more comprehensive evaluations carried out in conjunction with the dissemination of Bulletin 4 and Bulletin 6 confirmed extremely positive support for the survey to continue and an almost unanimous view that the data are useful, particularly as a reference source, as teaching material (in public educational institutions at all levels, and in police colleges), in program or service delivery and for professional interest and development. Some reported uses of the data, were completedly unexpected, such as in counselling of offenders.

Recommendations for improvement in the basic CUVS included extension of the survey to include rural victims, elderly victims and women - all priorities which are included in our future survey plans.

Scaled-down versions of the crime/victimization survey are in particular demand for police planning and evaluation. In fact demand has outstripped our ability to respond due to resource limitations. Although detailed information on the full range of crimes covered by the CUVS cannot be obtained from the smaller samples interviewed, and some detailed information on victim characteristics is also lost, preliminary work with Metropolitan Toronto Police on their Community Policing evaluation project shows that the telephone survey methodology is sufficiently robust to provide much of the information the evaluators require.

As was anticipated the survey did uncover considerable differences by community or neighbourhood in victimization rates, in perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system, and in willingness of victims to report crimes to the police. It seems likely therefore that a post-implementation survey will capture any changes which may occur over time - very valuable data from an evaluation point of view.

It is evident that considerable technical support must be provided to ensure full and proper use of the survey findings. If resources permit, it should be possible to develop police planning and evaluation survey "kits" which could help local researchers with the adaptation and implementation of such scaled-down crime survey methods, and with the interpretation of findings. Police departments are now looking to the Secretariat for technical assistance of this type, and it is our hope that we can provide the service required.

APPENDIX A

List of International Respondents to the Bulletin Series Mail-Back Cards

Australia

- Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Services of South Australia Inc.

Belgium

- C. Somerhausen - Inst. of Sociology, Bruxelles
- Katholicke Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium

France

- Interpol - Saint Clou
- Centre International de Gerontologie Sociale - Paris.

Germany

- World Society of Victimology, Monchenglad, Bach FR. Germany
- Prof. Hans Juergen Kerner - Institute of Criminology, Heidelberg

Great Britan

- John Lea, Middlesex Polytechnic - Enfield
- J.A. Hopkinson, Probation Officer, Bristol
- College of Technology - Stockport, Cheshire

Hong Kong

- Secretary for Security, Government Secretariat

Israel

- Division of Criminal Identification - Israel Police
- Institute of Criminology, Jerusalem
- Department of Criminology, Bar-Ilan, Univeristy of Ramat Gan.
- Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mt. Scopus

Italy

- Librarian, United Nations Social Def. Res. Inst., Rome, Italy

Mexico

- Vema (a.c.) Cuernaraca

South Africa

- Dept. of Criminology - University of Durban - Westville.

Sweden

- Professor Alxar Nelson - Juridicum Uppsala, Sweden
- Professor Knit Sveri, Inst. of Criminal Science, Stockholm, Sweden

Switzerland

- Professor C. Robert, Faculty de Droit, Geneva Suisse.
- Office Federal de la Justice - Berne.

The Netherlands

- Ministry of Justice - Research & Documentation Centre, The Hague.

U.S.A.

- Dade Miami Criminal Justice Council, Miami
- National Institute of Justice, Washington, D.C.
- Massachusetts Council for Public Justice, Somerville.
- Crime Prevention & Enforcement, N.I.J. Washington, D.C.
- Criminal Justice Division, Office of the Governor - Austin, Texas
- Wayne County Sheriffs Dept. - Lyons, N.Y.
- Department of Corrections, Indianapolis.
- Texas Probation Association, Bryan, Texas
- McHenry County College - Crystal Lake
- Eastern Montana College - Billings, Montana.
- Centre for Study of Crime, Delinquency & Corrections - Southern Illinois University.
- Milne Library, Suny, Genesco
- M. J. Dohorty - Harrison, N.J.

APPENDIX B

Sample of Canadian Respondents to the Mail-Back Survey

Media

- Montreal Gazette.
- Good Times - Calgary Seniors Newspaper.
- Journalist - C.B.C. T.V. - Quebec.
- Erin Advocate - Erin, Ont.
- La Source - Charlesbourg, Que.

Police

- White Rock Detachment - R.C.M.P.
- Chief of Police - Lunenburg.
- R.C.M.P. - Yellowknife
- Sexual Assault Co-ordinator, Metro Toronto Police.
- Chief of Police - Peterborough Police Force.

Researchers/Academics

- Law Teacher, Holy Angels High School, Sydney, N.S.
- A. Doob - University of Toronto.
- Dr. Gwynne Nettler - Dept. of Sociology - U. of Alberta.
- Research Officers - Canadian Police College.
- Instructor in Gerontology - Malaspina College.

Provincial/Municipal Governments

- Crown Council - Alberta Attorney General.
- Social Planning Council of Ajax Pickering.
- Manitoba Corrections Division.
- Kelowna Status of Women, Resource Centre.
- Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital.

Probation/Parole Services

- Probation Parole Services - Oshawa.
- Agent de probation - Chatham.
- Ontario Adult Probation & Parole Service - Simcoe.
- Probation Service, Winnipeg.

Libraries

- City of York - Public Library.
- Librarian, Institute of Urban Studies, U. of Winnipeg.
- Queens University, Law Library, Kingston.
- J.W. Crane Memorial Library - Toronto.
- Centennial Library - Edmonton.

Victim & Voluntary Organizations

- Catholic Womens League of Canada.
- People Against Impaired Driving - Edmonton.
- Transition House Association - Charlottetown.
- Planning for People Ltd. - Chatham, Ont.

Social Agencies

- John Howard Society - Oshawa.
- Elizabeth Fry Society - Kelowna.
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind - Vancouver.
- Salvation Army - Edmonton.
- Whitewood Historical Museum.

Federal Government

- Health and Welfare - Canada.
- National Parole Board - Fort Langely, B.C.
- Editor of Debates - House of Commons, Ottawa.
- The Senate of Canada - Ottawa.
- Dept. of Supply & Services - Ottawa.

Crime Prevention Units

- Surrey Community Crime Prevention Society.
- Crime Prevention - YMCA - Pointe Claire.
- Crime Prevention Officer - Nepean Police Force.
- Crime Prevention - Toronto Police Force.

Lawyers/Courts

- Judge Provincial Court, Toronto.
- Adelyn Bowland, Barrister & Solicitor - Toronto.